

From Supervision to Innovation: Exploring the Sequential Pathways of Work-Life Balance and Effort

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ABSTRACT

An innovative mind is an asset for the organization; capturing the intellect people; nurturing their critical thinking and retaining those employees is always a critical task for the organizations. Leaders take this responsibility for the betterment of their business firm. On, innovative work behavior, notably the missing link is identifying the impact of latest renowned underexplored leadership style, ebullient supervision. Developing over the affective event theory, this paper explored the simple relation as well as sequential mediation of work-life balance and work effort invested by an employee due to ebullient supervision. Using the famous probability sampling technique, purposive sampling, the data is collected from 382 employees; both supervisors and supervisees, working in software houses of Pakistan. The advanced version of PLS-SEM is used to explore the uncovered paths among the constructs. The rigorous results supported the presumed relations that work-life balance and work effort simply and partially mediate the impact of ebullient supervision on innovative work behavior of employees, proving this study novel. Thus, this study ensures the perspicacity for future leaders to execute their policies to enhance the innovative environment at their workplace.



Introduction

Steve Jobs, the founder of Apple Co., once said “Innovation has nothing to do with how many R&D dollars you have. When Apple came up with the Mac, IBM was spending at least 100 times more on R&D. It’s not about money. It’s about the people you have, how you’re led, and how

much you get it”(Stier, 2024, p. 227). Richterich (2024) emphasized that innovation without the people is nearly impossible. Thus it is also necessary to understand the indispensable role of leadership to run any business giant as they are the one dealing with diverse people. Moreover, technical awareness and revolution has transformed the world (Kulkarni & Bansal, 2024). Apart from size; multinational organizations, and medium even short term organizations are working leaps and bounds to maximize their profitability by reducing their supply chains’ lead time, revoking the wastage of resources, maximum utilization of manpower and further by advancing in every aspect of their operations. Industry 4.0 and Industry 5.0, with the advancement of Artificial Intelligence, is nowadays the real face of the business world making innovation significant in this century (Xu, Lu, Vogel-Heuser, & Wang, 2021). Human Resource Development (HRD) of every organization is struggling hard to cope-up with the challenge of enhancing creativity and innovativeness of the employees.

The rapid technology change provoked investigation of the phenomenon of innovation in multiple sectors of the industry considering it as a need of an hour. Mashkoor and Muhammad (2023a) studied creativity and innovation, Delevska and Osorio (2024); Molina-Castillo, Meroño-Cerdán, Lopez-Nicolas, and Fernandez-Espinar (2023) coined the blend of innovation with technology in hospitality industry. Gao and Deng (2018); Kumar, Hasija, Kumar, and Sageena (2023) narrated ecotourism industry an innovative form of tourism sector, Chidziwa, Chidziwa, and Langa (2023) uncovered the impact of innovative environment in education industry.

Happier employees are preeminent for generation of satisfied customers (Chi & Gursoy, 2009) which are truly supported and backed by positive leaders in the workplace (Ramadhan, Munsiyah, & Maliki, 2024). Chughtai and Khan (2024) while investigating knowledge-oriented leaders; Gelaidan, Al-Swidi, and Al-Hakimi (2024) during exploration of authentic and servant leadership styles; Rasheed, Hameed, Kaur, and Dhir (2024) studying the ethical leadership style with innovative work behavior supported the influence of these leadership styles on innovative work behavior of employees. Mashkoor and Muhammad (2023a) uncovered the impact of Ebullient supervision, a novel positive leadership style, where the leaders willfully cheer-up the employees by humor, creating positive environment, celebrating the employees’ personal and organizational events and achievements; overall fun at workplace resulting in improvement of performance. This study aims to identify the hidden connection of this coeval leadership style on innovative work behavior of employees in software house, information technology industry of Pakistan.

According to Pakistan Software Association (PASHA) and Pakistan Software Export Board (PSEB), the local revenue in IT industry is growing significantly and will continue with same pace in future (Ilyas & Rajpoot, 2024). The unending fluctuation in demand from customers of IT industry deems the significant impact of innovation in this industry which alternatively adheres the competition across the globe. Ritonummi, Siitonen, Salo, and Pirkkalainen (2024) emphasized the importance of innovative ideas in IT industry and reducing the order fulfilment time to enhance the satisfaction and loyalty of the customers.

Sun, Wang, Deveci, and Chen (2024) described the uneven situation of rivalry among the suppliers due to swift change in technology in IT industry. Since the growth of software house industry cannot be studied while ignoring the impact of innovativeness of employees but still this concept is lacking in existing literature, indicating a gap. Thus, this study is conducted to fill this gap in the literature by identifying the antecedents of IWB specifically in software houses.

Researchers and scholars are studying the influence of leadership styles on creativity and innovative behavior of employees (AlMulhim & Mohammed, 2023; Sjahruddin, Ariawan, Tj,

Efendi, & Yuwanda, 2024). The management plays a significant part for the better nourishment of the workplace flourishing a dynamic environment for more productivity (Islam, Zahra, Rehman, & Jamil, 2024), by framing the specification and description of job for its employees, scheduling and identifying the hidden maneuver of the society (Bag, 2024) thus acting for catalyzing the innovative behavior of employees in the industry.

Erselcan and Özer (2023) emphasized the importance of fun at workplace to boost the productivity level of the employees. The concept of fun at the workplace is often studied in manufacturing concerns (see Jyoti, 2022; Plester & Lloyd, 2024) but the software houses; the IT sector is still underexplored in the existing literature. The IT industry of Pakistan, reached \$1.15bn, marking 5.89% growth in FY 2023-24 initial half (Hanif & Sultan, 2024), Its need of an hour to explore the possible unforeseen aspects that can impact the innovative behavior of employees in this sector of industry. Undoubtedly, fun and creative ideas of innovative behavior are tied and evident in literature (Islam et al., 2024; Knezović & Drkić, 2021) but still inexplicable in the IT industry, thus this study aims to identify the impact of ES in the IT industry of Pakistan through the employees of software houses.

The well-being of employees is also evident having a positive correlation with work-life balance (Becker, Belkin, Tuskey, & Conroy, 2022). Employees with balanced work and personal life often report higher job satisfaction, reduced stress (Wood, Oh, Park, & Kim, 2020), and improved mental health (Ayar, Karaman, & Karaman, 2022). Therefore, this positive well-being is closely associated with increased work effort (Palumbo, 2020) and overall productivity.

As discussed above, Palumbo (2020) narrated that a balanced work-life behavior of the employees is antecedent of work efforts. Ryan (1947, p. 22) defined the term effort at work as, “*the relationship between actual rate of performance and the capacity of an individual at a given time.*” Whereas performance of an employee is the upshot of work effort (Van Iddekinge, Arnold, Aguinis, Lang, & Lievens, 2023) and performance remains consistent and become more productive with a balance in personal-professional duo of life (Ahmed, Ashrafi, Ahmed, Ahmed, & Azim, 2024).

This study based upon the Affective Event Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), will act as a beacon of light for the HRD of service sectors including IT sector, and will be prosperous for future scholars. Initially, this paper identified the new acquaintance of the recently coined leadership style; the ebullient supervision (ES) with the work-life balance of employees (WLB) and work effort (WE) which consequently shapes the innovative work behavior of the employees (IWB) of software houses. This study is novel and of empirical importance as such types of connections and influence of this underexplored leadership style. Furthermore, focusing on ebullient supervision, this paper aims to explore the intensity of fun at workplace to catalyze the innovative behavior of employees. Finally, this study also imparts for the human resource development (HRD) practitioners of the software houses; IT industry to redefine their strategies and concurrent policies to include fun at workplace to excel the innovative thinking among employees of their organization.

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Affective Event Theory (AET)

Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) proposed the affective event theory (AET) stating that a person responds to positive activities and actions of the management in an effective way. Positive

environment boosts the affection of a person towards his organization thus an employee utilizes his full capacity and even though the personal resources to provide benefit his organization. Thus, this study propounds that the newly emerged leadership style coined by Ford, Guzzo, Abbott, and Bowen (2019), ebullient supervision, according to which the supervisor allows the intentional fun at workplace to activate the strong bond among the employees and their organization. The affective event theory has been studied enormously in the past literature (Chan et al., 2023; Salem, Selem, Khalid, Raza, & Valeri, 2023; Wang, Zhang, Cai, & Cui, 2024) acting as the grounding stone for the studies on creating fun at workplace which stimulates the positive environment resulting into enhancing the innovative as well as creative thoughts of employees. According to this theory, positive environment helps the employees to feel empowered (Radu, 2023) and helping them to generate new creative solutions (Kim & Beehr, 2023) and bringing innovative ideas by thinking out of the box (Hassan, Abid, Ali, Rehmat, & Zafar, 2024). Fluegge-Woolf (2014) claimed the development of positive affect in employees in an environment where fun at job is highly appreciated because such activities are the positive events at stressful job, whereas Abdelmotalieb (2024) narrated that amusing and congenial environment helps employees feeling job-security and thus arousing their innovative thoughts. Whereas, ebullient supervision precipitate a healthy environment, thus drawing upon the AET Theory this study proposes that ebullient supervision will help to create a balance between the work-life of employees as well as provoke their effort at work and builds a cognitive environment which resultantly makes the employees more innovative.

Ebullient Supervision & Innovative Work Behavior

Innovativeness at work is one of the crucial demands by firms from their working employees in every type of industry thus it has strong empirical research evidence in current literature. Information Technology is a rapidly growing industry due to the swift movement of artificial intelligence and technological revolution. It is an open secret in past studies that the participative leadership style (Dewi, Setini, Hapsari, & Dharmanegara, 2023; Jaboob, Awain, & Al-Ansi, 2023; Mpuangnan, Govender, Mhlongo, & Osei, 2024) and positive supervision styles (Foster, 2024), entrepreneurial leadership and transformational leadership (Ravet-Brown, Furtner, & Kallmuenzer, 2024) supported the innovative behavior of employees and claimed that positive leadership helps the subordinates working more ingeniously. Whereas, the impact of latest leadership style; ES on IWB is uncovered with less literature evidence. Since, the past studies also supported that cognitive behavior of employees is generated by happiness at work due to positive events at workplace which helps them working more fecund; Ford et al. (2019) also coined that ebullient supervision is an initiative by the leadership to promote fun at work to maximize the energy of employees so they can behave more prolific in innovation. So, it is required to identify the impact of this leadership style that is reinforcing the employee creativity (Mashkoo & Muhammad, 2023a); been influencing the innovative work behavior of employees too. Thus backing up on the aforementioned discussion and literature, we hypothesize that:

H1. There is a positive impact of ebullient supervision on innovative work behavior of employees.

Ebullient Supervision and Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance is a state of stability where a person is capable enough to segregate the events of personal as well as professional life successfully. The effect on work-life balance by the contemporary leadership style ebullient supervision is under cover; thus require an exploration. Ford et al. (2019) concluded that ebullient supervision is a cause of development of positive environment at workplace due to worthy and enjoyable activities that creates fun at work. Whereas, relying upon Affective Event Theory proposed by Weiss and Cropanzano (1996), it is

proposed that a positive workplace may generate positive vibes that turn into affective behavior (Nimran, Al Musadieq, & Afrianty, 2024) in lives at home (Palumbo, 2024) and resultantly developing the critical thinking of employees. To overcome this loophole of literature and based upon the theoretical framework in Fig. 1, backed with AET the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2. There is a significant impact of ebullient supervision on work-life balance of employees.

Work Life Balance and Work Effort

Van Iddekinge et al. (2023) anchored the work effort as the devotion, intensity and persistence put by an employee at work. The relationship between work-life balance (WLB) and work effort (WE) is absent in literature evidence. Haar, Roche, and ten Brummelhuis (2018) proclaimed that work-life balance enhances the job satisfaction and reduces the job burnout, whereas Kossek, Perrigino, Russo, and Morandin (2023) claimed that supportive leadership turns the gap down between the work and life conflicts; whereas the employees feel pessimist when not supported by the leaders in the organizational setting (Kacmar, Zivnuska, & White, 2007). Thus there is a need to identify that either work-life balance effects the effort at work in IT industry.

Happiness at work (Al-Shami, Rashid, & Cheong, 2023) leads to less stress, increased gratification at job, and healthier cognitive abilities; similarly entrepreneurial support leads to maintaining work-life balance (Zhao, Jiang, & Yin, 2020) which then leads to put more work effort and ends up with better efficiency at work. This positive emotional state is closely associated with higher levels of engagement, creativity, and job performance. Thus, it is presumed based on the above discussions that there will be a relationship between WLB and WE which can be hypothesized as follows:

H3. There is a positive effect of work-life balance on work effort of employees.

Work Effort and Innovative Work Behavior

Innovative thinking of employees is a base for successful organizations (Azevedo, Schlosser, & McPhee, 2021) without critical thinkers the business can collapse thus, Rampa and Agogu  (2021) argued that the contemporary challenges faced by firms nowadays can be resolved with the support of committed employees. Human beings are always willing to put more effort in a system where they feel overwhelmed, supported, and appreciated (Eisenberger, Rhoades Shanock, & Wen, 2020). This appreciation leads to the development of affective commitment (Iqbal, Ahmad, & Nazir, 2023) in them thus they feel more satisfied at job and perform more devotedly. The leadership supporting their impoverished subordinates handling their personal issues faces more enthusiasm from these people at professional platforms. The altruistic nature of their leaders tends to improvise these employees' capabilities to gear up innovative solutions to existing problems and bring up with creative ideas to enhance the financial stability of the business (Pulido-Martos, Gartzia, Augusto-Landa, & Lopez-Zafra, 2024). This not only fosters the productivity among employees but the organization itself too. Thus, this research aims to identify the influence that WE put to flourish the IWB of employees in software houses. Thus the following relation is proposed:

H4. There is an impact of work effort on innovative work behavior of employees.

Work-Life Balance and Work Effort as Sequential Mediators

Pieterse, Van Knippenberg, Schippers, and Stam (2010) claimed that the enrapt minds including work engagement are the reasons for energizing the innovativeness of employees; whereas mobbing at work declines the personality and skills adversely (Zahoor, Shaheen, & Tariq, 2023). Work-life balance is when a person manages his official tasks as well as personal duties and obligations. Positive leadership style which creates peaceful workplace is predominant cause of enabling this balance (Islam et al., 2024), lowest work pressure (Yu, Liu, Lin, & Chi, 2024), engaging work behavior (Hadi, Setiawati, Kirana, Lada, & Rahmawati, 2024), and OCB (Al-Shami et al., 2023) enhances the productivity and more usage of creative ways to encounter the issues at work.

Past literature, including the extant literature of meta-analysis of three decades on innovative work behavior conducted by Peerzadah, Mufti, and Majeed (2024), has identified many factors influencing the innovative work behavior, either positively or negatively, of employees in multiple types of industries, these factors include diversity, gender discrimination, knowledge sharing, technical advancement, culture, collaborative networks, social media, green innovation (see. Afsar & Umrani, 2020; Bataineh, Sánchez-Sellero, & Ayad, 2024; Gui, Lei, & Le, 2024; Hemmert, Cho, & Lee, 2024).

Ali, Li, and Qiu (2022) reconnoitered the mediation of WLB in employee engagement and IWB claiming an affirmative results. Similarly, Lee et al. (2020) in their meta-analysis claimed that work effort has played an evident role for creativity among employees. Whereas, there is no direct evidence of work effort and work life balance in a mediation role generating a loophole in current literature. Hence, in light of the studied literature and discussion with support of affective event theory (AET) in this paper above, it is postulated that WLB and WE has the capacity to sequentially mediate the ES and IWB. Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H5. Work-life balance and Work effort sequentially mediates the relationship between Ebullient supervision and Innovative work behavior of employees. H5

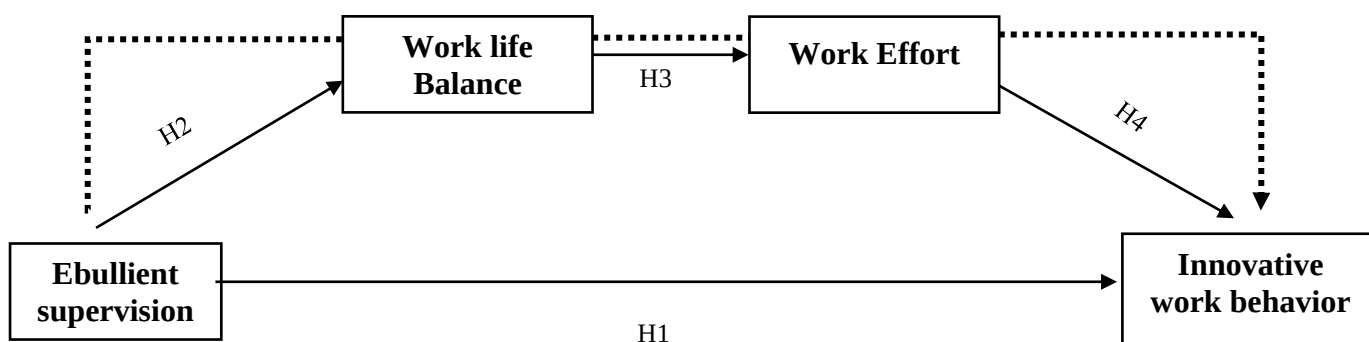


Figure 1: Proposed Research Model

Source: Authors own work

Research Methodology

Aligning with the literature (see. Mashkooor & Muhammad, 2023b; Sarwar, Aamir, Bichao, & Chen, 2022) the data was collected from 382 employees of 25 software houses using purposive sampling using two different questionnaires to avoid the issue of common biases (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). Under the positive paradigm to raise the objectivity of the research it was ensured that supervisee must be working for at least last six months (Mashkooor &

Muhammad, 2023a). The first questionnaire was for the supervisors to calculate the innovative work behavior of their direct subordinates through 9 items, adopted from (De Jong & Den Hartog, 2010) for each supervisee anchoring on Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). The second questionnaire was based on demographics as well as adopted items for supervisees to measure ebullient supervision of their direct supervisor through 13 item scale of Ford et al. (2019), and work-life balance through 4 items explored by Brough, Timms, and Bauld (2009) and work effort via 10 items anchored by De Cooman, De Gieter, Pepermans, Jegers, and Van Acker (2009); Proper coding was conducted rigorously to avoid mismatching. A sum of 450 questionnaires was disseminated based on 10:1 rule defined by Barclay, Higgins, and Thompson (1995). 405 questionnaires were received back; whereas 382 were properly filled maintaining the response rate of 84%. All items were carefully selected from well-defined questionnaires so there was no issue of reliability and validity ($\alpha = 0.791-0.878$). Since, this study contained the underexplored and novel relationships of ES with IWB, WLB, and employees WE, more over the data was normally dispersed thus the use of PLS-SEM technique is justifiable as claimed by Hair Jr, Matthews, Matthews, and Sarstedt (2017).

Results and Discussions

Total 382 properly filled responses representing 81.2% male and 18.8% female respondents are depicted in Table 1 mentioned below. Ajmal, Islam, and Khan (2024) mentioned the male dominance in IT sector of Pakistan. The maximum respondents 90.1% were below the age of 45 years and 64.9% were with 1-5 years working experience. It is furthermore studied that these demographics have either weak in relation with other constructs thus considered as controlled variables.

Table 1: Descriptive Analysis (N = 382)

Demographics	Category	Respondents Frequency	Respondents Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	310	81.2
	Female	72	18.8
Age	<25	50	13.1
	26-35	221	57.9
	36-45	73	19.1
	>45	38	9.9
	Intermediate	75	19.6
Qualification	Bachelors	131	34.3
	Masters	128	33.5
	Above	48	12.6
Job Type	Contractual	95	24.9
	Permanent	240	62.8
	Third Party	47	12.3
	6 months - 1 Year	102	26.7
Service	1 -5 Years	248	64.9
	> 5 Years	32	8.4

Source: Authors own work

Measurement model

Table 2 depicts the outer loadings (OL), acceptable internal reliability (α), composite reliability (CR) and convergent reliability (AVR). OL of most items met the threshold (i.e. >0.70) whereas the items stated as IWB4, IWB6, ES3, ES7 and WE5 were deleted from Innovative Work Behavior, Ebullient Supervision and Work Effort respectively that failed to meet the threshold of OL. Bacon, Sauer, and Young (1995) formula of composite reliability (CR) was adopted where the values of CR meets the required threshold >0.80 for all constructs. Furthermore, the convergent validity of the measures was accessed, as the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) was greater than the required threshold of 0.50.

Table 2: Outer Loadings (OL), Cronbach's Alpha (α), Composite Reliability (CR) and Convergent Reliability (AVE)

Measures	OL	α	CR	AVE	
IWB1	0.756	0.833	0.858	0.528	
IWB2	0.838				
IWB3	0.787				
IWB5	0.771				
IWB7	0.718				
IWB8	0.733				
IWB9	0.747				
ES1	0.718	0.860	0.881	0.581	Source: <i>Aut hor s own work</i>
ES2	0.766				
ES4	0.805				
ES5	0.782				
ES6	0.791				
ES8	0.771				
ES9	0.740				
ES10	0.727				Het erot rait — mo notr ait rati o (HT MT) (He nsel er, Rin gle, & Sars tedt,
ES11	0.733				
ES12	0.796				
ES13	0.757				
WLB1	0.824				
WLB2	0.798				
WLB3	0.848				
WLB4	0.815				
WE1	0.795	0.850	0.869	0.533	
WE2	0.743				
WE3	0.743				
WE4	0.719				
WE6	0.854				
WE7	0.787				
WE8	0.701				
WE9	0.811				
WE10	0.736				

2015) is recorded in Table 3 as below to depict the discriminant validity whereas all constructs met the threshold (i.e. <0.9).

Table 3: Discriminant Validity (HTMT)

Constructs	ES	IWB	WE	WLB
ES	--			
IWB	0.850	--		
WE	0.835	0.748	--	
WLB	0.864	0.779	0.842	--

Source: Authors own work

Structural model

Direct Paths analysis

Initially the impact of independent variable, ES on IWB (*H1*) is studied using the advanced version of PLS SEM. Then the impact of ES on first mediator of chain mediation WLB (*H2*), then the impact of first mediator WLB on second mediator of chain mediation i.e. WE (*H3*) is studied and lastly the impact of WE on dependent variable IWB (*H4*) is studied to complete the chain mediation. Table 4 depicts the above direct relations as per hypothesis developed in section 2. The rigorous results shows that ES positively and significantly predicts the IWB ($\beta=0.637$, $p<0.001$), thus *H1* is supported. Furthermore, ES also shows a positive and significant impact on WLB ($\beta=0.740$, $p<0.001$); whereas WLB shows a significant impact on WE ($\beta=0.795$, $p<0.001$) resultantly supporting *H2* and *H3* aligning with the recent literature and supporting theory; affective event theory (AET). Moreover, the second mediator of chain mediation; WE ($\beta=0.508$, $p<0.001$) also influences the IWB supporting *H4* in conformance with existing literature (see. Afsar, Al-Ghazali, Cheema, & Javed, 2021; Nimran et al., 2024).

Table 4: Hypotheses Testing (Direct Paths)

Hypothesis	Structural Path	β -value	t-value	p-value	Result
<i>H1</i>	ES → IWB	0.637	10.550	0.000	Supported
<i>H2</i>	ES → WLB	0.740	13.913	0.000	Supported
<i>H3</i>	WLB → WE	0.795	11.855	0.000	Supported
<i>H4</i>	WE → IWB	0.508	7.733	0.042	Supported

Source: Authors own work

Indirect path analysis

Table 5 represents the indirect pathway; chain mediation analysis studied in this paper. It is apparent from the results below that the indirect effect of ES through work-life balance and work effort (i.e. 0.447) is significant but still lesser than the direct effect (i.e. 0.740, $p < 0.000$), backing the findings that (for both work-life balance and work effort) sequential partial mediation exists in the relation between ebullient supervision and innovative work behavior of employees (supporting *H5*). These findings are backed by the literature discussed in section 2 which is aligned with the supporting theory. Figure 2 explains the significant results of this model through PLS SEM technique.

Table 5 – Hypotheses Testing (Chain Mediation) Source: Authors own work

No	Structural Paths	Total Effect	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	t-values	p	Result
H5	ES>WLB> WE >IWB	0.740 (p=0.000)	0.477 (p=0.000)	0.263	10.403	0.000	Partial Mediation

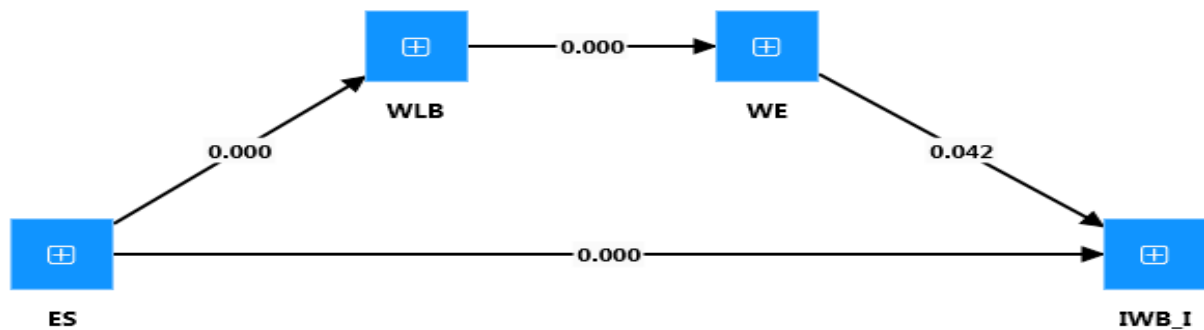


Figure 2: Confirmation of Proposed Relationships

Source: Authors own work

Implications of the study

Discussion

This study was conducted to identify the imperative role that employees play in behaving innovatively at the workplace and how this behavior can be catalyzed through ebullient supervision, moreover to uncover the impact of work-life balance and the work effort in a sequential mediation between dependent and independent variables. To examine these relationships, firstly the direct path between ES and IWB was studied that aligns with the supporting theory and findings revealed that there is a significant impact of this positive style of ebullient supervision on the innovative behavior of employees serving in software houses (Chughtai & Khan, 2024).

Secondly, the indirect effects were studied to explore the impact of WLB and WE; which also underpin the existing literature that WLB helps employees to perform better and bring novel ideas (Ali et al., 2022; Kalliath & Brough, 2008). Also, satisfied and happier employees put in more work effort by coming up with new motives to enhance efficiency at work (Bellet, De Neve, & Ward, 2024). It is apposite to discuss that the direct paths, without the involvement of both mediators WLB and WE, ebullient supervision has a positive and significant impact on innovative work behavior. However, after the introduction of the mediators, the findings divulge that both mediators partially mediate the proposed relationship of ES and IWB.

Theoretical contribution

Affective Event Theory (AET) has been explored in different dimensions in the past literature stating the development of cognitive behavior in human beings due to the positive environment that propels their abilities. Thus, the findings of this study improve the sagacity of this theory by supporting its definition. Secondly, ebullient supervision has scarce literature support thus this theory also contributes valuable insights into understanding its relation with the innovative work

behavior of employees. Identifying this gap, this study investigated and tried to fill the gap of literature with the significant results discussed in the previous chapter.

Thirdly, another novel contribution of this study is to discern the partial mediation of work-life balance and work-effort with innovative work behavior; which is itself an addition to the existing literature on these constructs.

Practical implications

Existence without innovation is nearly impossible in the 21st century. Thus, this study dwells on the practical importance of studying the behavior of employees working in the IT industry and identifying the influencing factors that policymakers and top-notch management of organizations may consider while defining their organizational strategies.

Furthermore, the results supported the all connections built in this study. Thus, it can be practically seen that to encourage the employees' innovative work behavior, the manager must adhere the importance of ebullient supervision. Smiling, greeting, encouraging play at work, using an appropriate sense of humor, being supportive, and having social events, such as celebrating achievements or birthdays as coined by (Ford et al., 2019), are the ways that may have zero or less monetary value but it boosts the balance in employees personal life too thus making him able to invest more effort at work and work more innovatively.

Finally, in a nutshell, HRD and top management can take initiative at the workplace in light of this study to apply the ebullience at work to reduce the stressors of employees, appreciating their efforts and turning the innovative ideas into reality.

Limitations and Future Directions

The study withholds some limitations apart from the contributions discussed in previous sections. The data is collected from a specific industry targeting the specific software houses which brings a question mark on the generalizability of the results. Moreover, these results may apply to developing countries like Pakistan, limiting its scope, because here the work-life balance is influenced by multiple other political and economic factors but the developed and economically stable countries may have different perspectives. Thirdly, the limited time frame restricted in gathering the numerous viewpoints of dyads used in this study. These limitations can be eliminated by the upcoming scholars by adding qualitative perspectives along with this quantitative approach.

Conclusion

The lack of literature on ebullient supervision style brings attention of the scholars and researchers to uncover the relation of this leadership style with numerous behavioral aspects of an individual at the workplace. The IT sector is the most vulnerable in this age of technology and thus needs a supervision style like ebullient so it may help the employees to work with vigilance and more proactiveness to enhance their as well as organizational efficiency. Ford et al. (2019) claimed that humor at work develops a positive environment, which promotes workaholism and satisfaction of employees (Hassan et al., 2024). Keeping in view the importance of the IT industry of a developing country, this study was conducted which proved the relationship of ES with IWB through the pathways of WLB and WE resulting in the presence of partial mediation thus contributing to the body of knowledge on these constructs as well as an effort to contribute towards the Affective Event theory (AET) by conforming its support to these novel antecedents of

Innovative Work Behavior of employees and finally this study will contribute the HRD of this industry to recalculate their policies to promote the innovative environment at work.

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